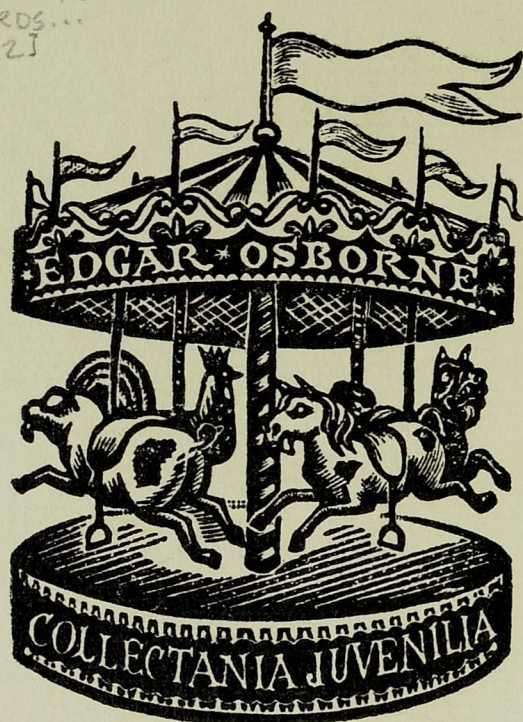


WORDS OF ADVICE
TO SCHOOL-BOYS
BY CHARLES KINGSLEY

EDITED BY
E. F. JOHNS, M.A.

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KINGSLEY, CHARLES
WORDS...
[1912]



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To Gilbert Bagnani.
from C.H.G. - July 1913



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Charles Kingsley and his favourite Scotch terrier "Dandy."

An unpublished photograph taken by his brother, Mr. George Kingsley,
at Eversley, in the year 1856 or 1857.

Words of Advice to School-Boys

Collected from hitherto unpublished
Notes and Letters of the late
CHARLES KINGSLEY,

EDITED by

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Headmaster of Winton House School, Winchester.

With a Preface by LUCAS MALET.

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PREFACE.

THIS little volume contains the notes of an address given by my father, Charles Kingsley, to the boys at Winton House, and of extracts from unpublished letters to my two brothers, and to the Rev. C. A. Johns, his lifelong friend and, for a time, his tutor.

To my father's remarkable versatility, his gifts as a poet and novelist, his labours in the cause of social reform and recreations as a naturalist, his books have borne, and still bear, convincing evidence. The notes and extracts which follow are on a different level, and may claim an indulgence which could not be asked for finished work. They are wholly unstudied, unpretentious in character and in expression, a spontaneous response to the call of the moment. Therein, I think,

lies their appeal and merit ; since they outline, in its simplest form, not only the teaching my father delivered to others, but the rule of life which he obeyed unswervingly himself.

Both teaching and rule may be summed up in three words—Truthfulness, Cleanliness, Honour—understood in their plain common-sense meaning, and applied fearlessly to all matters of thought and conduct, whether merry or serious, whether of small moment or of great.

LUCAS MALET.

THE ORCHARD, EVERSLEY,
October 21st, 1912.

Words of Advice to School-boys.

IN the early seventies—a few years before his death—Canon Kingsley used often to stay at Winton House, where his son Grenville was at school. Upon one of these occasions he gave an address to the boys, who were then just going home for the holidays, the notes of which I lately found in turning over some old letters. By permission of his daughter, Mrs. Mary St. Leger Harrison (Lucas Malet), I am now reproducing these notes in full in the hope that they may, partially if not entirely, meet a want widely felt both by parents and by schoolmasters, of the “right thing” to say to boys who are soon going to a Public School.

I was a very small boy at the time, but I remember most vividly the pleasure of a

long drive with Canon Kingsley and of his conversation on the way. He had the faculty of drawing out those much younger than himself without talking down to their level, and of interesting them in that study of Nature, which was the great joy of his life.

The notes of his address are as follows:—

“Be manly, boys. If you will be manly, if you will be Christian men, you will attain the highest point that God gives men to gain. Be manly. Remember this—there is a great difference between being manly and aping the vices of a man. Don't do anything that does not become a man. Play well, and, above all, work well; work heartily, and play heartily. When you go home follow your sports wherever you may be, and try to do everything well. If you see a man making a fool of himself, avoid him instead of copying him.

Above all, be truthful. I do not mean merely to say to you 'don't tell lies'; anybody can avoid telling lies. But carry it further—carry it as far as this—let there be no copying; do not merely avoid telling lies; but act truthfully and honestly. Don't think 'I should be found out if I were to tell a lie'; but say 'it is not truth, and therefore I will not do it.' When you play, don't cheat; carry the principles of honour and religion into your games as well as into your work. One thing more, though it is a delicate thing to say—but you boys understand me; I as a man say to you as boys 'Be pure.' A man of my age may say to you what you may not understand yourselves. In after life there is nothing which will so vex or annoy a good man's mind as to feel that he has ever, by word or deed, put into the mind of

a little fellow anything that is bad or impure. You understand me. It is surprising how anything of that kind sticks to a man in illness and trouble, and it is astonishing the power with which this cleaves to the mind while it is so difficult to retain good impressions.

“You are now going home, and remember there is not one of you who cannot carry credit to the school, credit to your headmaster and all those with whom you have anything to do, by the way in which you demean yourselves at home. Be jolly; there is nothing in the world so jolly as going home; but remember that each one of you by your behaviour—to those beneath you especially—should show that you are not ‘swells’; we don’t want to make you ‘swells,’ but gentlemen. By being a gentleman I mean that you should

show that courtesy, kindness, and tact, that thinking of others which marks that a man, so far from being a mere selfish elbowing fellow, who wants to get himself to the top somehow or other, will think of others while he does it."

This is sound advice, and a boy who follows it will not go very far wrong.

I cannot myself recall the occasion upon which the address was given, but I remember clearly his telling us at various other times never to do or to say anything of which we should be ashamed for our mothers to know ; always to take off our hats to anyone who might salute us ; and never to go anywhere without our evening clothes.

It was a rule at Eversley that no parochial "shop" should ever be talked in the evening ;

the business and cares of every-day life were to be discarded with the morning dress.

It is extraordinary that these *obiter dicta* of Charles Kingsley should remain so vividly in one's mind out of the miscellaneous impressions of boyhood. No doubt the secret lay to some extent in the way in which he spoke to us; and there is something also in the form of words he used which appeals straight to boys' hearts. This I have proved by reading aloud his notes to my present pupils and then telling them to reproduce the substance of his address in their own words. Generally the reproduction of a sermon is quite beyond their powers; but scarcely one of them failed to bring out these three points that boys should be manly, truthful, and pure.

It is doubtful whether they quite under-

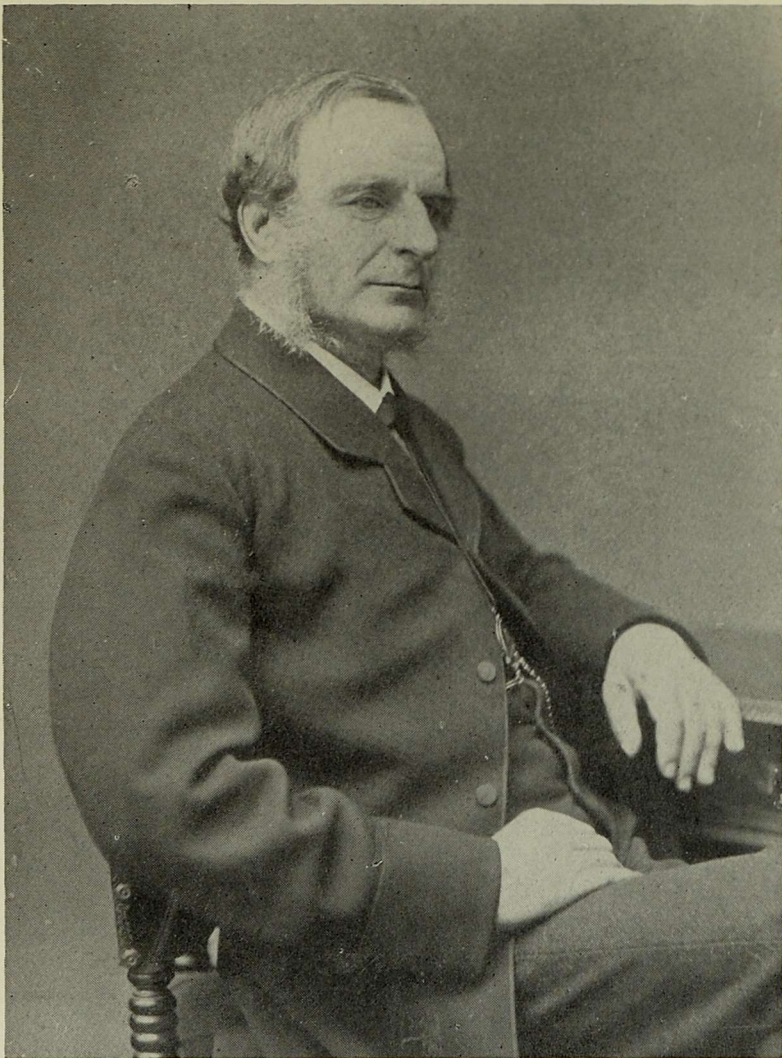
stood what Kingsley meant by being "pure": but they understood enough to realise that there are dangers against which they will have to be on their guard later on; and when the time comes, they will have his words to help them. Whether it is wise or not to enlighten young boys any further as to physiological facts, and the possible evil consequences of sins of this particular nature, is a problem which must be left to the discretion of the individual parent. It is, I think, quite possible to say too much, and to arouse a morbid curiosity with regard to matters of which they need know nothing. On the other hand, there is great risk in launching a boy upon his Public School life without giving him any warning at all of the pitfalls which may be in store for him. Perhaps Kingsley's advice: "Be pure, and

don't say or do anything of which you would not like your mother to know," meets the case very fairly.

But there are other forms of temptation to which the Public School boy and the "gamin" are equally exposed, and one in particular against which Canon Kingsley was constantly waging war — the temptation to bet and gamble. To bet on an uncertainty, he used to say, is the act of a fool: to bet on superior knowledge the act of a knave. So, too, the buying, selling, and "swopping" which goes on in so many Preparatory Schools, did not commend itself to him at all, being, as he thought, a first step in the wrong direction.

In a letter to his son, who was then at the Rev. R. Cowley Powles' Preparatory School, he says:—

"I have written to tell Mr. Powles how



Charles Kingsley

Aged 53.

Photograph by Messrs. Thrup of Birmingham.

pleased I am at the swopping and bargaining being stopped. I do not like it at all. A gentleman should have nothing to do with making bargains. It is a different thing if you are a merchant or a banker, for they have regular rules of trade to keep them right, and are doing their country good by trading ; but private bargaining is sure to be a dirty and greedy business at last, like horse dealing."

Another school-boy foible to which he objected was the habit of excusing one's own deficiencies by throwing the blame upon someone else, and more particularly of accounting for a bad report by saying that the Master was somehow or other at fault. In a letter dated 1859, he says to his elder son :—

"Don't talk any nonsense about Mr. S.

not being a gentleman. What has that to do with the matter? A man may be a farmer's son and yet a gentleman, if he behaves as he ought; and he may be a nobleman's son, and yet a snob, if he behaves as he ought not. Remember what I told you of how the masters are tried. I know if I was one of them I should be like the old woman who lived in a shoe, and had so many children she didn't know what to do—and therefore 'whipt them all soundly and put them to bed!'"

In a later letter he speaks emphatically of the danger of choosing a career too hastily :—

"All I say is, hurry no man's cattle, specially your own! Before you go to India or Queensland, or anywhere else, you will go to Cambridge. There you will stay till you get

your degree—on that point there will be no change of purpose. And by that time you will have seen a great world and men and manners of which you have no idea as yet. And by the time you have taken your degree you will probably have changed your mind three or four times, and no blame to you. But all I say is, that you must work and learn: and that if you qualify yourself for the Indian Civil Service, you will qualify yourself for half a dozen things more, better than you would do in any other line of reading. You shall be what you like: not what you happen to like now, but what you like when, after the experience of University life, you feel what you can do. Interest I have—money I have not. Money will make a man of a monkey. Interest will only give a man a chance of shewing whether he is a man or

not. And that he can only shew by hard work, which proves him to be a man and fits him for anything which turns up. So *work*, and never bother your head about the future—you are too young for that; you know too little of the world, and therefore too little of what is possible in the future. The wisest man knows very little. But if he works he is ready for anything which may turn up.”

Charles Kingsley's religion was, above all things, practical. *Laborare est orare* was the keynote of his teaching; and nothing annoyed him more than to see boys loafing about with their hands in their pockets and complaining that there was nothing to do. In a lecture which he gave at Wellington College in 1863, he drew attention to the value of cultivating hobbies as a safeguard

against temptation in leisure hours: and he was largely instrumental in starting the Museum at that school. He several times joined the Winton House boys in their expeditions to the New Forest, and Lord Ribblesdale (in "The Queen's Staghounds") recalls him "with his trousers turned up high over famous lace boots, and a butterfly net and collecting box, coursing a Purple Hairstreak over an intricate country." Other "old boys" speak enthusiastically of the lectures which he gave at Winton House on "Earthquakes," on "The Island of Trinidad" and on "The Geology of the Isle of Wight," all about the year 1870.

In particular, Captain the Hon. George Anson writes:—"You ask me about 'a' lecture by Kingsley. I think we had several. I have a very strong impression of Kingsley

himself saying things to us in the schoolroom on various occasions : perhaps he was not always in the strict sense delivering a lecture. Certainly he lectured to us about the West Indies, which was to him a dream of humming-birds and buccaneers. We had to write out the lectures afterwards, and I have a copy of 'Madam How and Lady Why' presented to me by your father, which I almost think was the result of my efforts in that particular line. But I grieve to say that I cannot remember a word of the substance of any of the lectures, though I remember so well the man himself standing there talking to us, with his great long limbs, and eyebrows sticking out like a tiger's moustache—and the *way* he talked. I have often and often wished that I could have all that over again with the knowledge of all

that it was worth ; for never again shall we come across such a refreshing type of humanity, a real Christian with no vestige of nonsense in his large bony frame.

“ I was, as you know, a contemporary of Grenville Kingsley’s at Winton House, and again at Harrow. My recollections of Winton House are pervaded with the repeated presence of Kingsley—at the school, in the New Forest, as alluded to by Lord Ribblesdale, and especially on a never-to-be-forgotten day at Eversley, when we were all taken over to catch butterflies and feast on strawberries and cherries.

“ If Kingsley were not with us so often as my memory tells me he was, it must be that his extraordinary personality impressed itself so strongly on a not very observant boy as to exclude from subsequent recollections

the perhaps lengthy intervals during which we did not see him."

Further light is thrown on this period by Charles Kingsley's letters to my father and mother, of which I have a large assortment, touching upon many topics alike of that day and of this.

His views on the relative importance of Classics and Modern Languages are expressed in a letter written to my father in 1873, when his son Grenville (after an absence of nine months from school, which he had spent with a private tutor, Dr. Schulze) had just gone to Harrow:—

"I am very sorry that you are vexed about Grenville's place, for I am not; and I expect him to rise rapidly. He got up nine places his first day. Moreover, if he has lost a little in Latin and Greek this

nine months, he has gained hugely in German, French, Geography and Arithmetic, which will be of more importance to him, as he will go after his first year, I think, into the Modern School."

In an earlier letter, written soon after his boy came to Winton House, he shows a clear perception of the importance of maintaining good health as a factor in education:—

"My own belief is that if we can only keep right the *liver* which Grenville inherits from *both* parents, he will be a fine, frank, forward lad, and a credit to us both."

The cordiality of the relationship between Canon Kingsley and my father in their roles of Parent and Schoolmaster may be illustrated by one letter written when Grenville had just left Winton House:—

"My dear Friend," Kingsley says, "I

cannot let this day pass without recording my deep gratitude to you for all your kindness and parental care towards our boy. May God bless and reward you for it; for we cannot: and may you see what I am sure you will feel your best reward, the fruit of your work in the boy himself.

“But now that he has left you—which I can as yet hardly realise, we must not let this severing of our school life be any ‘severing of our loves.’ We must continue to see and hear as much as possible of each other. I remain always, as I am now, your most affectionate friend”——

Is it to be wondered at that a man who wrote such letters as this should have endeared himself to all his friends?

I cannot forbear quoting a sentence from a much earlier letter, written at a time of

great national trouble, but applicable to a recent disaster :—

“ Would to God that one quarter of the benevolence *now* expended in shutting the stable door had turned itself four months ago into the commonsense channel of preventing the horse being stolen.”

Kingsley's favourite relaxation was fishing, and he used often to come over from Eversley for a day's sport in the Itchen, and on these occasions he would sometimes take two or three boys down to the water-meadows with him.

He was strongly of opinion, as was my father (himself an ardent Naturalist), that the minds of young boys should be trained in habits of observation, so that country walks should become a privilege full of interest and excitement, rather than an infliction of dull

routine. The story of "Eyes and No Eyes" appealed to his own childish imagination, and whenever he had an opportunity he would try to arouse a similar enthusiasm in others.

His magnetic influence over boys was, no doubt, chiefly due to the keenness with which he joined in all their pursuits—a keenness which he maintained to the very end of his life:—

"For him no tiniest flower had lost its charm,
No song of bird fell tuneless on his ear."

And in this joy with which the works of Nature filled him, he wished all the world, and especially the world of youth, to share; for if ever praise were well deserved then he deserved what Matthew Arnold said of him, that he was the most generous man he ever knew. He gave freely to all of his money, his knowledge, his sympathy, and his love.

